

Political Profiles of the Georgian Electorate: Panel Survey Data

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Foreword

This brief report was prepared within the framework of the extensive research project of the Institute of Policy Studies, supported by the Local Governments Initiative (LGI) of the Open Society Institute and the Citizens Advocate! Program funded by the US Agency for International Development.

Here are presented some findings related to political profiles of the Georgia's electorate made during the first two rounds of the panel survey, which was carried out in October-November 2002 and June 2003 on most of the territory of Georgia, with exception of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (we concentrate here mostly on the June 2003 results, bringing the 2002 data mainly for comparison to illustrate change). The total of 1100 persons have been interviewed, selected so as to take into account demographic variables such as urban/rural settlement type as well as gender and age groups, considered to be a representative sample of the Georgia's population.

While two authors, Nana Sumbadze and George Tarkhan-Mouravi, actually wrote this report, many other persons contributed to actual research and the fieldwork, preparation of the questionnaire, interviewing respondents, and processing the results. We would like to acknowledge the especially valuable contribution and support provided by IPS research assistants – Ana Kitiashvili and Ekaterine Pirtskhalava, to whom we extend our sincere gratitude. While interviewers involved in the fieldwork are too numerous to be listed here, all of them deserve our gratitude as well. Tinatin Eristavi did excellent job of entering complicated statistical data.

While this report reflects various contributions to the survey, the authors are fully responsible for all its drawbacks and the mistakes.

INTRODUCTION

Knowledge and understanding of popular attitudes, behaviour patterns, perceptions, understandings and aspirations of the population is crucial for effective public policy planning, which should be necessarily based on reliable and objective data. However, despite such importance of the issue, it is difficult to find any information based on regular surveys of the Georgia's population. Deficiency of information generated by reliable and regular inquiries of Georgian citizens is felt and proclaimed by scholars, policy and decision-makers, and different agencies alike. Especially meagre is the information on different regions of Georgia, while the processes in the capital Tbilisi are more in the focus of attention. Absence of systematic studies does not permit to monitor dynamics of societal changes in response to changes in the environment and to relate such changes to specific policies or decisions. Only diachronic perspective poses possibility to identify reasons for the observed behaviour and, when change is needed, to work out an effective policy. Regular studies are necessary for the study of the dynamics of changes and their monitoring. Equally necessary is the measurement of the reaction of the population to the changes that take place in the environment, connection of these changes to the concrete policies and decisions.

Accordingly, the main goal of the panel survey carried out by the Institute for Policy Studies is the study of the public opinion, perceptions and patterns of behaviour of population, and to provide decision-makers and policy designers with the information about how the population reacts to important events and policies. The survey is aimed at gathering, analysing and making accessible the information on public opinion, perceptions, preferences and behaviour patterns of the population of Georgia. The data obtained through the survey is connected with the most important events of the country as identified by analysis of media. Recently many surveys have been carried out with the main goal to obtain ratings of the political parties and their leaders in the anticipation of forthcoming parliamentary elections. Our objective is more general and is targeted at the study of the characteristics that change more slowly and depend less on the immediate political changes.

The questions in the survey refer to the structure of the family of respondents, their economic status, assistant received and provided, employment status. In general the study served the purpose to study: the estimations that population make on issues of political, economic, public and cultural life: identification of the main problems that the country faces; foreign orientation of the country; attitudes towards other countries and international organizations; democracy and the rule of law; attitude towards the payment of taxes; tolerance towards different ethnic and religious groups; attitudes toward a number of economic and social policies, trust towards different branches of the government; appraisal of political parties and their leaders; estimation of the quality, equality and availability of social services; availability and trust towards different media sources.

The sample

The first wave of the panel survey was carried out in the period of October-November 2002 and the second in June 2003, in 9 regions of Georgia, Ajara, and in the capital Tbilisi, including both rural areas, 58 settlements and the following 21 towns: Abasha, Akhalkalaki, Akhaltsikhe, Akhmeta, Ambrolauri, Batumi, Bolnisi, Borjomi, Chiatura, Gori, Khashuri, Kutaisi, Lanchkhuti, Marneuli, Mtskheta, Rustavi, Tbilisi, Telavi, Tsageri, Zestaphoni, Zugdidi. The total of 1100 persons were interviewed, respondents were selected to correspond to the distribution of the population according to the settlement type, gender and age, so as to be a representative sample of the Georgia's population. About 57% of selected respondents were living in urban and 43% - in rural setting, among them c. 45% were males and 55% females, divided into five age groups (17-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 65+). 32.1% of respondents considered themselves to be poor, while 67.9% claimed to be either wealthy or of medium condition, further designated as "non-poor".

Almost a half of respondents (46.2%) are university students or have university degree (25.6% of rural and 61.4% of urban population), 27.2% have tertiary – high school (41.3% of rural and 16.8% of urban population), 21.6% has vocational (25.6% of rural and 18.7% of urban population), 4.9% has incomplete school education (5.8% of rural and 2.7% of urban population), and 0.9% have undergone only 4 classes of primary schooling (1.7% of rural and 0.3% of urban population). The level of education of the urban, non-poor and young respondents is higher than of rural, poor and older ones.

In many areas covered by the survey, the difference in the level of education between the rural and urban population is statistically significant, as is significant the statistical difference between the poor and the non-poor (by self-assessment), and between the age groups.

Table 1

Age and gender structure of respondents in the June 2003 survey

	Age group	Males %	Females %	Total share of the age group %	Share of males in the age group %	Share of females in the age group %	Total %
1	17-24	16.4	11.2	13.6	55.0	45.0	100
2	25-34	22.6	15.9	18.9	54.3	45.7	100
3	35-44	19.2	21.4	20.4	42.9	57.1	100
4	45-54	14	17.2	15.7	40.5	59.5	100
5	55-64	11.6	15.2	13.5	38.9	61.1	100
6	65 and more	16.4	17.8	17.8	41.8	58.2	100
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

In general, 64.4% of respondents were married, 23.1% have never been married, 9.8% were widowed and 2.7% - divorced. 72.7% of respondents reported from 1 to 7 children, with the mean value of 1.6. On average rural respondents have more children ($M=1.8$), than the urban respondents ($M=1.4$). Besides that families are bigger in villages and comprise on average of 4.8 persons, while in towns families on average have 4.1 members. The majority of respondents (91.7%) are ethnic Georgians, 3.1% are Armenians, 2.8% are Azeri and 2.4% are of other ethnicity. 93.9% have been interviewed in Georgian, 4.8% in Russian, 0.9% in Azeri and 0.5% in Armenian. 45.9% estimated their health as neither good nor bad, 34.5% as good, and 19.6% as bad. The rural and urban population did not differ in regard to the estimation of health. The difference in regard to health was significant between the poor and non-poor. Much bigger share of the poor - 33%, than the non-poor - 13.5%, reported poor health status. It is not at all surprising that with the age increases the share of the people who have health concerns (such is 3.9% of 17-34 years olds, 19.8% of 35-64 years olds and 48% of the senior, more than 64 years olds respondents).

MAIN RESULTS

Below are presented the data concerning mainly politics and politicians, as such data acquire special interest in the period around the elections. It should be noted that the structural changes in the composition of political forces that took place since June 2003 should have had significant impact on the ratings of specific parties and their leaders, but would however have much lesser effect upon the social profiles and the value system of their respective supporters. Still, the personalities of leading political figures representing each party continue to stay much more important than any party programmes are. Hence, ratings of the leading political figures by their popularity and the trust towards them and as well as the evaluation of their political perspectives, acquire special importance for understanding political processes.

Who is liked by whom: general rating of political leaders

The rating of political figures is a popular topic, various ratings and polling activities are particularly frequent before the elections. However, apart from rating the lists of names, it is important to know what are the factors that determine choices. In the survey, respondents were asked to choose from the listed eight personal qualities two, which they considered as the most important for evaluation of politicians. It is worth noting that against the background of overwhelming mistrust and corruption, honesty became the leader among such qualities, the most valued as most probably the scarcest (it was chosen by 42.4% of respondents, i.e. about by two and a half times more than those who choose the second feature - managerial skills and three times more than the third one - record of past achievements). At the same time concern may be caused by modest importance ascribed by respondents to the attractiveness of party programmes.

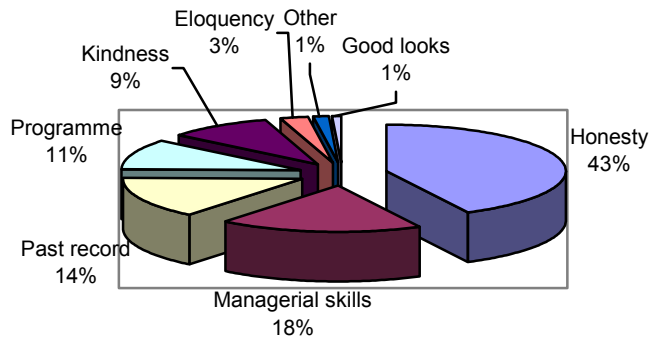


Figure 1
The importance of the features of politicians for their evaluation

Keeping such preferences in mind, it is particularly interesting to look at the ranking (according to their being liked) of individual politicians, especially in dynamics comparing of the June 2003 ratings with those obtained in November 2002¹.

Table 2
Attitude of respondents towards leading Georgian politicians, June 2003
(Excluding respondents who had not expressed their attitude)

Rank	Politician	Liked by %	Indifferent %	Disliked by %	Total %
1	Nino Burjanadze	60.7	25.9	13.3	100
2	Gogi Topadze	49.3	33.6	17.1	100
3	Shalva Natelashvili	47.1	30.2	22.7	100
4	Mikheil Saakashvili	35.7	34	30.3	100
5	Levan Gachechiladze	34.3	40.8	24.9	100
6	Jumber Patiashvili	32.6	37.8	29.6	100
7	Aslan Abashidze	28.7	35	36.3	100
8	Guram Sharadze	25.5	40.6	34	100
9	David Gamkrelidze	24.8	45.1	30.2	100
10	Irakli Batiashvili	22.4	45.2	32.4	100
11	Mikheil Machavariani	21.9	45.1	33	100
12	Giorgi Baramidze	21.3	47.3	31.5	100
13	Temur Shashiashvili	21.1	36.4	42.5	100
14	Zurab Zhvania	19.6	38.9	41.5	100
15	Akaki Asatiani	15.2	47.2	37.6	100
16	Vazha Lordkipanidze	14.6	43.4	42	100
17	Eduard Shevardnadze	13.6	28.8	57.6	100
18	Vakhtang Rcheulishvili	13.5	28.4	58.1	100
19	Avtandil Jorbenadze	12.2	28.1	59.7	100
20	Irina Sarishvili	10.5	35.2	54.3	100
21	Akaki Zoidze	8.8	39.7	51.5	100
22	Igor Giorgadze	7.9	28.1	64	100
23	Vitali Khazaradze	3.5	25.4	71	100

¹ In November 2002 respondents also evaluated politicians, but at that time the list consisted of 16 persons. One person, namely Zviad Dzidziguri, had been removed from that list due to the decrease of his political significance. Instead, a few other names had been added, including the incumbent President, Eduard Shevardnadze.

Among those respondents who know these politicians (party leaders were known by practically all the respondents), the most popular are Nino Burjanadze (60.7%), Gogi Topadze (49.3%) and Shalva Natelashvili (47.1%). The least liked are: Vitali Khazaradze (71%), Igor Giorgadze (64%) and Avtandil Jorbenadze (59.7%). Respondents were the most indifferent towards Giorgi Baramidze (47.3%), Akaki Asatiani (47.2%) and Irakli Batiashvili (45.2%).

As is seen from the Table 2, since November 2002, the popularity of Nino Burjanadze, Mikheil Saakashvili, Shalva Natelashvili and David Gamkrelidze had significantly increased. Instead, the liking of Vakhtang Rcheulishvili, Irina Sarishvili, Jumber Patiashvili and Vazha Lordkipanidze had fallen to significant extent.

Table 3

Comparison of the support of politicians in November 2002 and June 2003

	Politician	November	June	Difference
1	Nino Burjanadze	41.6	60.7	19.1*
2	Gogi Topadze	49.4	49.4	0
3	Shalva Natelashvili	41.2	47.1	5.9*
4	Mikhail Saakashvili	28.5	35.7	7.2*
5	Levan Gachechiladze	35.7	34.3	1.4
6	Jumber Patiashvili	39	32.6	6.4
7	Aslan Abashidze	26.6	28.7	2.1*
8	David Gamkrelidze	20.3	24.8	4.5*
9	Zurab Zhvania	16.6	19.6	3*
10	Akaki Asatiani	18.2	15.2	3
11	Vazha Lordkipanidze	18.5	14.6	3.9
12	Vakhtang Rcheulishvili	25.9	13.5	12.4
13	Avtandil Jorbenadze	14.7	12.2	2.5
14	Irina Sarishvili	17.5	10.5	7
15	Igor Giorgadze	11.3	7.9	3.4

*In June 2003 support was higher

Profiles of supporters: who supports whom

It is very interesting to reveal the social profiles of those respondents who support this or that politician, i.e. what is the demographic and economic status of a supporter, place of residence or general political orientation.

Geography of support

It is quite natural that the liking of a politician and the respective political support have definite geographical dimension. So, some politicians are more liked in Imereti, others are more liked in Kakheti. Political taste varies also across the settlement type, i.e. rural vs. urban.

Table 4

The liking of politicians across the regions, June 2003, in %

Poilitician	Tbilisi	Ajara	Guria	Racha	Samegrelo-Svaneti	Imereti	Kakheti	Mtskheta-Mtianeti	Samtskhe-Javakheti	Kvemo Kartli	Shida Kartli
Burjanadze	69.2	81	52	28	59.2	52.3	53.5	60	66.7	53.3	69.4
Abashidze	19.5	85.2	10.9	2	46.9	22.6	12.8	20.8	44.2	23.3	33.7
Gamkrelidze	23.9	21.9	15	16	16.9	23.6	20.6	38.2	58.8	22.2	35.2
Topadze	45.1	64	47.8	60	31.9	41.1	44.4	39.6	84.2	58.1	59.6
Zhvania	28.5	27.8	13.6	14	9.2	8.7	18.8	14.6	41.3	10.3	24.5
Natelashvili	45.1	50	33.3	32	42.7	30.5	63.1	75.5	60.5	48.2	59.8
Patiasvili	28.5	50	24.4	6	43.3	23.4	21.7	46.9	47.7	34.9	42.9
Saakashvili	31.3	58.2	15.2	18	30.6	29	47.1	44.9	59.5	26.1	48.5

As it appears, certain politicians are particularly popular, in relative terms, in certain regions:

Nino Burjanadze in Ajara, Tbilisi and Shida Kartli

Aslan Abashidze in Ajara, Shida Kartli and Samtske-Javakheti

David Gamkrelidze in Samtskhe-Javakheti, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, and Shida Kartli

Gogi Topadze in Samtskhe-javakheti, Ajara and Racha

Zurab Zhvania in Samtskhe-Javakheti, Tbilisi and Ajara

Shalva Natelashvili in Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Kakheti and Samtskhe-Javakheti

Jumber Patiasvili in Ajara, Samtskhe-Javakheti and Mtskheta-Mtianeti

Mikheil Saakashvili in Samtskhe-javakheti, Ajara and Shida Kartli

If the viewpoint is reversed, a look at political preferences from the regional perspective would demonstrate that the following politicians are best liked in respective regions:

Tbilisi - Burjanadze, Topadze and Natelashvili

Ajara - Abashidze, Burjanadze and Saakashvili

Guria - Burjanadze, Topadze and Natelashvili

Racha - Topadze, Natelashvili and Burjanadze

Samegrelo - Zemo Svaneti – Burjanadze, Patiasvili and Natelashvili

Imereti – Burjanadze, Topadze and Natelashvili

Kakheti – Natelashvili, Burjanadze and Topadze

Mtskheta-Mtianeti – Natelashvili, Burjanadze and Patiasvili

Samtskhe-Javakheti – Topadze, Burjanadze and Natelashvili

Kvemo Kartli – Topadze, Burjanadze and Natelashvili

Shida Kartli – Burjanadze, Natelashvili and Topadze

As already noted above, there is difference in popularity found not only between the regions, but also depending on the settlement type. Among the supporters of Zhvania, Burjanadze and Topadze there is much higher proportion of urbanites, while rural respondents expressed more support toward Patiasvili, Abashidze and Saakashvili.

Table 5

Liking of politicians among the urban and rural dwellers

	Politician	Urban %	Rural %	Total %
1	Burjanadze N=637	59.3	40.7	100
2	Abashidze N=295	50.5	49.5	100
3	Gamkrelidze N=228	56.3	43.7	100
4	Topadze N=497	59.8	40.2	100
5	Zhvania N=203	68	32	100
6	Natelashvili N=479	52.8	47.2	100
7	Patiasvili N=334	50.3	49.7	100
8	Saakashvili N=368	51.9	48.1	100

Generally the difference in preferences between the rural and urban population in regard to their political orientation is quite interesting and sometimes unexpected. So, the rural respondents paid more attention to political programme (27.9% compared to 21.9% of urbanites) and the past achievements (43.5% among rural and 41.7% among urban population). For urbanites more important is the overall attitude towards the leader (7.7% among the urban and 7.2% among the rural population) and his/her eloquence in public speeches (6.6% of urban and 4.9% of rural population).

Similar differences between urban and rural respondents have been revealed also in regards to various orientations and attitudes. So, the bigger share of urban population (32.8%) compared to rural (22.8%) support Georgia leaving the Commonwealth of Independent Countries (CIS). More urbanites (67.2% as compared to 58.2% of rural respondents) support as well the closure of Russian military bases in Georgia. The rural population is somewhat more optimistic towards the resolution of ethnic conflicts - 78.2% of rural, compared to 66.6% of urban respondents, thinks it is possible to solve the conflict with South Ossetia, while in the case of Abkhazia such opinion is expressed by 75.9% rural and 64.8% urban respondents. At the same time, urban respondents tend to be more radical in thinking that the force can be used for resolving the conflicts.

Social and demographic profile of supporters

Statistical profiles of the supporters of various politicians differ in many respects. Especially interesting is the impact of such factors as education, gender and age.

Burjanadze, Abashidze and Patiasvili are more popular among women, while men prevail among the supporters of Gamkrelidze, Natelashvili and Topadze.

Table 5

Liking of politicians vs. respondents' gender

	Politician	Male %	Female %	Total %
1	Burjanadze N=637	42.2	57.8	100
2	Abashidze N=296	42.2	57.8	100
3	Gamkrelidze N=229	48.5	51.5	100
4	Topadze N=497	46.5	53.5	100
5	Zhvania N=203	42.9	57.1	100
6	Natelashvili N=479	46.8	53.2	100
7	Patiasvili N=334	42.2	57.8	100
8	Saakashvili N=368	43.2	56.8	100

While gender is an important factor, age paradoxically enough has much more limited influence upon political taste. This observation contradicts the expected difference between generations, being correlated with other important factors such as education level, and it seems various factors are pushing the situation in different directions, leading to eventual balance.

Table 6
Liking of politicians and respondents age

	Politician	18-34 years olds %	35-64 years olds %	65 and more years olds %	Total %
1	Burjanadze N=636	30.2	50.0	19.8	100
2	Abashidze N=296	34.1	46.6	19.3	100
3	Gamkrekidze N=229	31.4	52.4	16.2	100
4	Topadze N=497	33	48.9	18.1	100
5	Zhvania N=203	27.6	52.7	19.7	100
6	Natelashvili N=478	27.2	52.9	19.9	100
7	Patiashvili N=333	23.7	51.4	24.9	100
8	Saakashvili N=367	29.4	50.4	20.2	100

Indeed, as generations differ by educational level, it is interesting to observe the influence of education on political taste. The proportion of people with university education is the highest among the supporters of Zhvania, Topadze and Gamkrelidze and is the lowest among the supporters of Patiashvili, Saakashvili and Abashidze.

Table 7
Liking of politicians and the education of respondents

	Politician	Primary %	High school / Vocational %	University-graduates/ unfinished %	Total %
1	Burjanadze N=636	4.4	50.0	45.6	100
2	Abashidze N=295	7.1	53.6	39.3	100
3	Gamkrelidze N=228	4.4	48.7	46.9	100
4	Topadze N=495	3.8	48.9	47.3	100
5	Zhvania N=203	4.4	48.8	46.8	100
6	Natelashvili N=477	4.4	55.1	40.5	100
7	Patiashvili N=333	5.1	58.8	36.0	100
8	Saakashvili N=367	6.0	56.4	37.6	100

Economic dimension

Economic status of respondents obviously influences political choice, as is demonstrated in the Table 8. Theoretically the easiest way of describing economic status of a respondent is by evaluating his/her monthly income. However, respondents seldom give accurate answers when asked about their total monthly income, which may contain a very significant in-kind component, is often irregular and in any case its reported amount is rarely fully trustworthy. Nevertheless, such data is still useful for comparisons, and the overall picture is quite eloquent. According to the family incomes in May 2003, the proportion of families with the lowest income was highest among the supporters of Patiashvili, Natelashvili and Abashidze. The proportion of respondents with the highest income was concentrated among the supporters of Burjanadze, Zhvania and Saakashvili.

Table 8

Liking of politicians and the family income in May

	Politician	100-300 GEL %	300-700 GEL %	700 and more GEL %	Total %
1	Burjanadze <i>N=634</i>	86.6	10.1	3.3	100
2	Abashidze <i>N=295</i>	89.5	9.8	1.7	100
3	Gamkrelidze <i>N=229</i>	82.5	15.8	1.7	100
4	Topadze <i>N=496</i>	86.7	11.7	1.6	100
5	Zhvania <i>N=202</i>	85.1	12.4	2.5	100
6	Natelashvili <i>N=478</i>	90.8	8.6	0.6	100
7	Patiasvili <i>N=333</i>	93.1	6.3	0.6	100
8	Saakashvili <i>N=367</i>	88.5	9.0	2.5	100

Another characteristic factor influencing political choice is estimation by respondents themselves both of their present economic status and of its dynamic. Here we have a slightly different picture, although general trends are similar. Natelashvili, Patiasvili and Burjanadze have the highest proportion of those respondents who described their families “poor”, while the biggest proportion of “non-poor” can be found among the supporters of Abashidze, Topadze and Gamkrelidze.

Table 9

Liking of politicians vs. economic status of respondents (according to self-assessment)

N	Politician	Poor %	Non-poor %	Total %
1	Burjanadze <i>N=633</i>	32.4	67.6	100
2	Abashidze <i>N=293</i>	29.4	70.6	100
3	Gamkrelidze <i>N=227</i>	31.3	68.7	100
4	Topadze <i>N=496</i>	30.8	69.2	100
5	Zhvania <i>N=201</i>	31.8	68.2	100
6	Natelashvili <i>N=478</i>	37.9	62.1	100
7	Patiasvili <i>N=333</i>	36.9	63.1	100
8	Saakashvili <i>N=366</i>	31.4	68.6	100

At the same time, the proportion of the respondents who have reported that the economic condition of their families had improved during the past five years is the highest among the supporters of Zhvania, Abashidze and Topadze. Those, whose economic conditions declined, prevail among the supporters of Patiasvili, Natelashvili and Gamkrelidze.

Table 10

Liking of politicians vs. change in economic conditions of families during past 5 years

N	Politician	Improved %	Did not change %	Deteriorated %	Total %
1	Burjanadze N=631	25.4	42.9	31.7	100
2	Abashidze N=291	27.5	39.5	33.0	100
3	Gamkrelidze N=225	19.1	47.6	33.3	100
4	Topadze N=494	26.3	41.1	32.6	100
5	Zhvania N=202	29.2	39.1	31.7	100
6	Natelashvili N=474	21.7	43.2	35.0	100
7	Patiashvili N=331	23.6	40.8	35.6	100
8	Saakashvili N=365	24.7	43.0	32.3	100

Political optimism and fears of supporters

Perception of the present and the past situation in the country is one of the key general characteristics of the political orientation of citizens. For the sake of brevity it is labelled here as “political satisfaction”. The majority of respondents, despite their rather critical perception of the current situation, look into future with certain hope. Present is indeed perceived in very dark colours, in fact, by supporters of every single politician. But the difference still exists, and the highest proportion of dissatisfied with the current situation in the country is observed among the supporters of Gamkrelidze, Topadze and Natelashvili. In their turn, Zhvania, Patiashvili and Abashidze are supported by those who are more satisfied.

Table 11

Liking of politicians vs. satisfaction with the situation in the country

N	Politician	Dissatisfied %	Neutral %	Satisfied %	Total %
1	Burjanadze N=628	83.4	11.3	5.3	100
2	Abashidze N=294	77.9	16.0	6.1	100
3	Gamkrelidze N=229	85.2	9.6	5.2	100
4	Topadze N=495	83.8	11.7	4.4	100
5	Zhvania N=201	80.6	11.9	7.5	100
6	Natelashvili N=474	83.8	11.2	5.1	100
7	Patiashvili N=330	83.3	10.3	6.4	100
8	Saakashvili N=365	83.3	10.7	6.0	100

Such dissatisfaction becomes easy to understand if we look at its foundation - all respondents unanimously declare that currently it is impossible to lead a decent life through honest work.

Table 12

Liking of politicians vs. perceived possibility to secure decent life by the honest work

N	Politician	Possible %	Not possible %	Difficult to say %	Total %
1	Burjanadze <i>N=635</i>	25.0	55.4	19.5	100
2	Abashidze <i>N=295</i>	26.8	55.3	18.0	100
3	Gamkrelidze <i>N=228</i>	22.8	53.5	23.7	100
4	Topadze <i>N=496</i>	21.2	58.5	20.4	100
5	Zhvania <i>N=202</i>	24.3	60.4	15.3	100
6	Natelashvili <i>N=477</i>	24.1	61.8	14.0	100
7	Patiasvili <i>N=333</i>	24.0	59.8	16.2	100
8	Saakashvili <i>N=366</i>	24.9	58.2	16.9	100

About half of respondents expressed generally optimistic view of future, notwithstanding their political preferences. As it will be seen elsewhere, different is actually the source of their optimism, not that much its rate. In any case, against the background of dire present, revealed optimism evokes the surprise and hope. Although there are many optimists among respondents, still their highest proportion can be found among the supporters of Burjanadze, Topadze and Gamkrelidze, and the smallest among the supporters of Patiasvili, Saakashvili and Abashidze.

Table 13

Liking of politicians vs. general optimism

	Politician	Mostly thing will happen as I would like them to %	What I want is less likely to happen %	Total %
1	Burjanadze <i>N=626</i>	52.7	47.3	100
2	Abashidze <i>N=292</i>	46.6	53.4	100
3	Gamkrelidze <i>N=229</i>	52.0	48.0	100
4	Topadze <i>N=490</i>	52.4	47.6	100
5	Zhvania <i>N=200</i>	46.0	54.0	100
6	Natelashvili <i>N=471</i>	48.2	51.8	100
7	Patiasvili <i>N=327</i>	46.2	53.8	100
8	Saakashvili <i>N=363</i>	44.6	55.4	100

Against the background of such optimism, of special interest are the perceptions by respondents of the threats that the country may face in the coming five years. As in November 2002, in June 2003 respondents have been presented by a list of 11 possible dangerous developments with the request to estimate how likely these were to happen in the coming 5 years. As can be seen from the Table 14, the population expects in the first place the increase of diseases, contamination of the environment, increase in corruption and criminality, while expects the least - Russian military aggression (the expectation of which was particularly high in the Fall 2003 after several bombings of the Pankisi Gorge and various open threats expressed, and fell since), and armed ethnic and confessional conflicts. Likewise, the population fears less losing Georgian traditions and increase of corruption, however there is increased expectation of the contamination of environment, spread of diseases, and the popular riots.

Table 14

Perception of the threats Georgia may face during the next 5 years

N	Threat	June %	November %	Difference %
1	Increase of diseases (AIDS, TB, cancer, etc.)	77.1	72.5	4.6
2	Contamination of environment	75.0	65.0	10.0
3	Increase in corruption	72.1	73.7	1.6+
4	Increase in violence and criminality	67.6	65.5	2.1
5	Increase of poverty	69.7	71.4	1.7+
6	Popular riots against the government	64.3	62.6	1.7
7	Spread of religious sects	59.3	59.6	0.3+
8	Loss of cultural traditions	56.6	65	8.4+
9	Religious conflict	45.6	50.8	5.2+
10	Ethnic conflict	32.6	43.6	11+
11	Russian military aggression	27.9	40.9	13+

+ In June 2003 the threat has diminished, as compared to November 2002

Political orientation of supporters: economics and internal policies

Although politicians had not yet presented any consistent agenda about their policies and plans, still some key attitudes had been voiced, influencing the electorate and its preferences. Respectively, to significant extent the political choices of the population are determined by their own attitudes towards the foreign and interior politics. Although these attitudes are not always consistent and frequently are ambiguously defined.

A good example of such discrepancies is the need to reform the executive government through introducing the cabinet of ministers instead of existing President's Chancellery. Such approach is advocated by 32.4% of respondents, 18.6% thinks that no such reform is needed, while almost the half of the respondents - 49.0%, have no definite opinion in this regard. At the same time, respondents' position is more clear-cut and unambiguous with regard to curbing presidential power - 42.3% of respondents states that it should be confined, 33.2% has no position and 24.5% is against the restriction.

The majority of respondents are against the federal territorial arrangement of the country after the restoration of Georgia's territorial integrity (incorporating back Abkhazia and South Ossetia). In June 2003, according to the opinion of 50.7% of respondents, no region of Georgia should have the right to pursue policies independently from the centre. 32.3% support symmetrical federalism - in their opinion Ajara, Abkhazia, South Ossetia along with all other regions of Georgia should have equal rights and level of autonomy; 12.7% has expressed no opinion in this regard, 2.4% state that Abkhazia alone should have the special rights (more autonomy), while according to 1.9% - both Abkhazia and South Ossetia should enjoy special rights.

Especially important is the ranking of priority issues that the government has to solve, made by respondents. Respondents were asked to choose 5 most pertinent problems out of the list of 21 issues. Obtained ranking is in line with the generally understood priorities for societies in transition. It is clear that solution of economic and social problems is an absolute priority for the population. Among the priority issues are also the reduction of corruption, equality before the law and the problems of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the places of their current residence. At the same time, environmental problems as well as those related to foreign policy orientation are much less in the focus of the population.

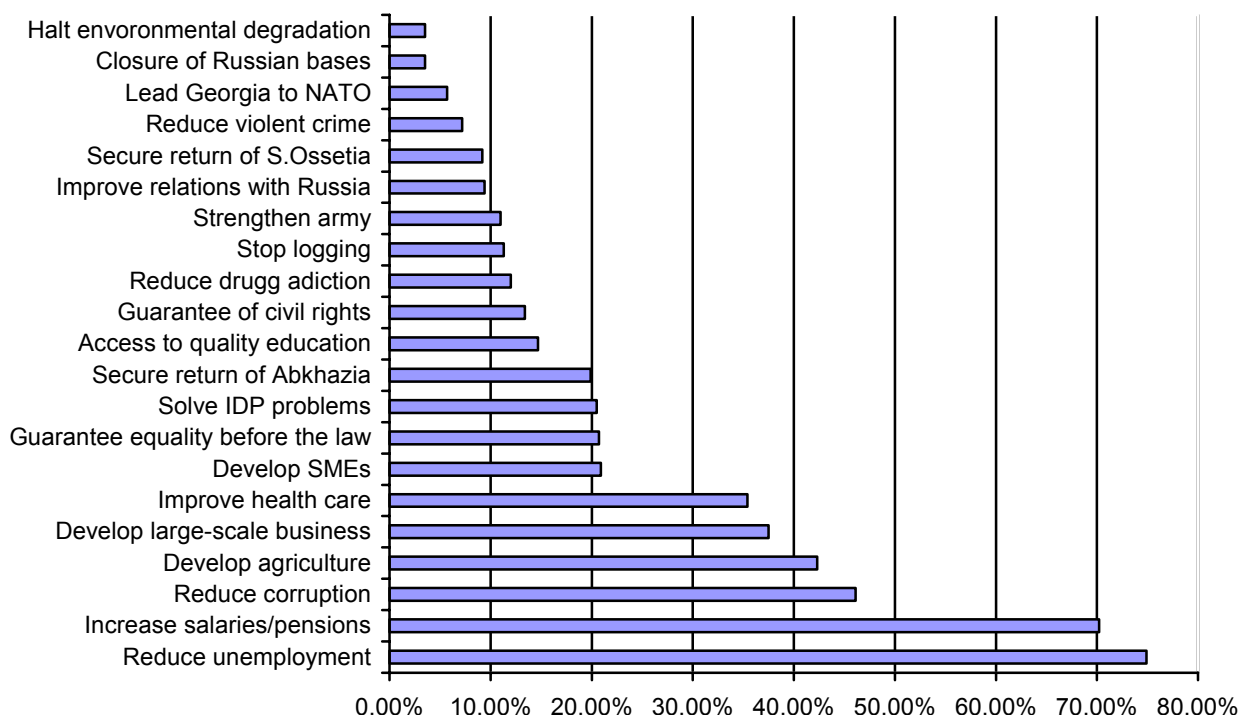


Figure 2
Priority tasks for the Georgian government

It is only too natural that the supporters of different politicians rank differently the policy priorities. Such differences are especially obvious regarding economic issues. It is worth noting that notwithstanding such differences, the majority of respondents see the development of big scale industry as the priority issue, probably viewing this as a source of sustainable employment opportunity. Advocates of large-scale industry development can be seen more frequently among the supporters of Abashidze, Saakashvili and Burjanadze, while the supporters of Zhvania, Topadze and Patiashvili have more positive attitude towards the development of a SMEs.

Table 15
Liking of politicians and the priorities of economic development

	Politicians	Development of the SMEs %	Development of the big scale enterprises %	Total %
1	Burjanadze <i>N=636</i>	33.6	66.4	100
2	Abashidze <i>N=295</i>	29.5	70.5	100
3	Gamkrelidze <i>N=228</i>	32.9	67.1	100
4	Topadze <i>N=496</i>	34.9	65.1	100
5	Zhvania <i>N=202</i>	37.6	62.4	100
6	Natelashvili <i>N=479</i>	33.8	66.2	100
7	Patiashvili <i>N=333</i>	33.9	66.1	100
8	Saakashvili <i>N=368</i>	31.5	68.5	100

Consequences of past privatisation of enterprises present an especially sensitive issue. Here the importance of populist slogans and different interpretations of what social justice is are revealed in full. Significant part of supporters of Natelashvili, Patiashvili and Gamkrelidze think that the unfairly privatised enterprises should be re-privatised anew, while more supporters of Topadze, Abashidze and Zhvania are against such re-privatisation.

Table 16

Liking of politicians and attitude towards re-privatisation

	Politicians	Enterprises should be re- privatised %	Enterprises should not be re- privatised %	Difficult to answer %	Total %
1	Burjanadze <i>N=635</i>	67.6	8.5	23.9	100
2	Abashidze <i>N=296</i>	65.5	10.1	24.3	100
3	Gamkrelidze <i>N=228</i>	68.4	11	20.6	100
4	Topadze <i>N=497</i>	65.2	10.5	24.3	100
5	Zhvania <i>N=203</i>	68.0	9.9	22.2	100
6	Natelashvili <i>N=478</i>	72.6	8.2	19.2	100
7	Patiashevili <i>N=333</i>	69.7	9.0	21.3	100
8	Saakashvili <i>N=368</i>	67.1	9.8	23.1	100

The estimation of the fairness of past privatisation and the need to reconsider the issue are directly linked with the attitude towards the governing élites, and especially the assessment of the state corruption level. A number of questions referred as to what extent the different branches of government acted in the interests of the country, region, towns or the village as compared to the preoccupation with personal or group interests. According to the respondents personal and group interests motivate most of all the members of the Parliament – expressed by 91% of respondents (90.2% in November 2002), than President of Georgia – 80.5% (76.2% in November 2002), regional authorities – 79.8% (75.4% in November 2002) and the least - members of local councils – 68.7% (61.3% in November 2002). Demonstrated unanimity in the evaluation of private interest among public servants is the indicator of the great deficiency of the trust toward the government, and could be qualified as its legitimacy crisis.

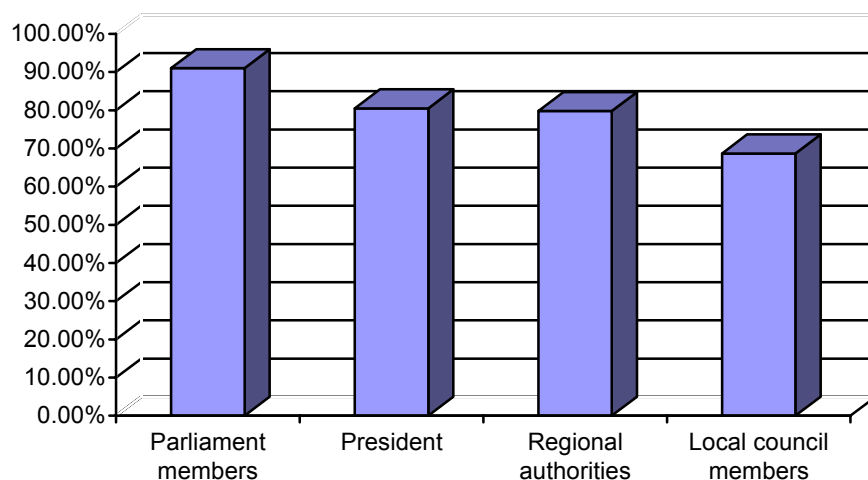


Figure 3

Extent to which respective authorities are perceived to be motivated in their actions by personal or group interests

Corruption is perceived by the population as one of the gravest problems of the country. Large share of the population (62.1%) is convinced that the all three branches of state authority - legislative, executive and judicial are closely interlinked and immersed in corruption (24.2% had expressed no opinion in this respect and according to 13.7% did not agree). At the same time many respondents have admitted that during past 6 months they were either demanded to give a bribe or/ and actually had given bribes. The biggest proportion of the respondents (10.4%) had to deliver illegal payments at healthcare facilities (In November 2002 this item was not present), 6.9% - to police (7.0%

in 2002), 6.1% (5.2% in 2002) - at educational institutions, 5.5% (4.8% in 2002) – at the taxation office, 3% (3.9% in 2002) to the customs officers, 1.8% (1.2% in 2002) – at *gamgeoba* or town hall/local council. The biggest source of corruption as perceived by respondents is the customs service, as indicated both in June 2002 and November 2003, and what is really disturbing - according to 72.3% (72.9% in November) of respondents economically the most profitable job position is at custom's office. All other agencies fall far behind in such assessment: police scored 10.3% (9.1% in November 2002), prosecutor's office - 7.3% (6.2% in 2002), courts and judiciary - 7.0% (7.4% in 2002), hospitals - 3.2% (4.4% in 2002).

External orientation of respondents: foreign policy

Foreign policy issues, although less in the focus of public attention, are still quite important from the viewpoint of their impact on political preferences. Here some dynamic can be observed during the one year period, mainly reflecting the change of external environment and pressures.

Since November 2002, the number of those, who thought that the membership in NATO and the European Union was very useful for the country, has increased. Generally inclination toward Russia has decreased, while the general orientation toward the West has strengthened. It should be noted, that there is certain logical inconsistency between striving to join Euro-Atlantic structures and staying in the CIS, this probably related to the general ambiguity of the official position and limited awareness regarding geopolitical realities.

So, paradoxically, in June 2003 - 44.9% (39.0% in November 2002) of respondents thought that Georgia should not leave CIS (according to 16.6% of these, Georgia's participation in CIS should even increase), while only 28.5% (29.5% in 2002) stated that Georgia should leave CIS; 26.6% (31.5%) of respondents did not have a position. At the same time, much more clear-cut was the respondents' attitude toward joining NATO and European Union - 62.0% of respondents (55.4% in 2002) stated that Georgia should strive to acquire NATO membership, 29.4% (31.8% in 2002) did not have a position, and only 8.6% (12.8%) thought that Georgia should not strive for NATO membership. Even more (increasingly) numerous were the supporters of Georgia's membership in the EU - 72.2% (69.5% in November 2002). 23.3% (24.9% in 2002) did not have an opinion and only 4.5% (5.6%) were against membership.

Differences were revealed among the supporters of different politicians regarding varying level of confidence in their home country. So, significant share of supporters of Abashidze, Patiashvili and Gamkrelidze think that Georgia's fate depends more on other countries than Georgia itself; according to the supporters of Gamkrelidze, Topadze and Natelashvili Georgia's fate depends equally on Georgia and other countries; while according to Abashidze, Zhvania and Burjanadze supporters, it depends on Georgia mostly.

Table 17

Liking of politicians vs. confidence in Georgia's possibilities

N	Politician	Fate of Georgia depends more on other countries %	Fate of Georgia depends equally on Georgia and on other countries %	Fate of Georgia depends more on oGeorgia %	Total
1	Burjanadze N=634	14.2	33.3	52.5	100
2	Abashidze N=295	21.4	22.7	55.9	100
3	Gamkrelidze N=228	17.1	37.3	45.6	100
4	Topadze N=495	14.7	35.6	49.7	100
5	Zhvania N=202	15.3	29.2	55.4	100
6	Natelashvili N=477	14.3	33.8	52.0	100
7	Patiashvili N=332	19.0	31.6	49.4	100
8	Saakashvili N=367	15.8	33.2	51.0	100

Respondents were presented with the list of 13 foreign states and were requested to choose from the list - three countries that Georgia could rely upon. The majority (76.6%) choose USA, while much less supporters had the

second most often chosen country - Russia (49.6%). At the same time, when respondents were forced to choose between USA and Russia as a focus of foreign orientation, the difference between the supporters of these two countries significantly decreased, once again revealing certain inconsistency of attitudes; Still, the majority - 52.9% (43.9% in 2002) made their choice in favour of the USA, while the remaining 47.1% (56.1% in 2002) chose Russia.

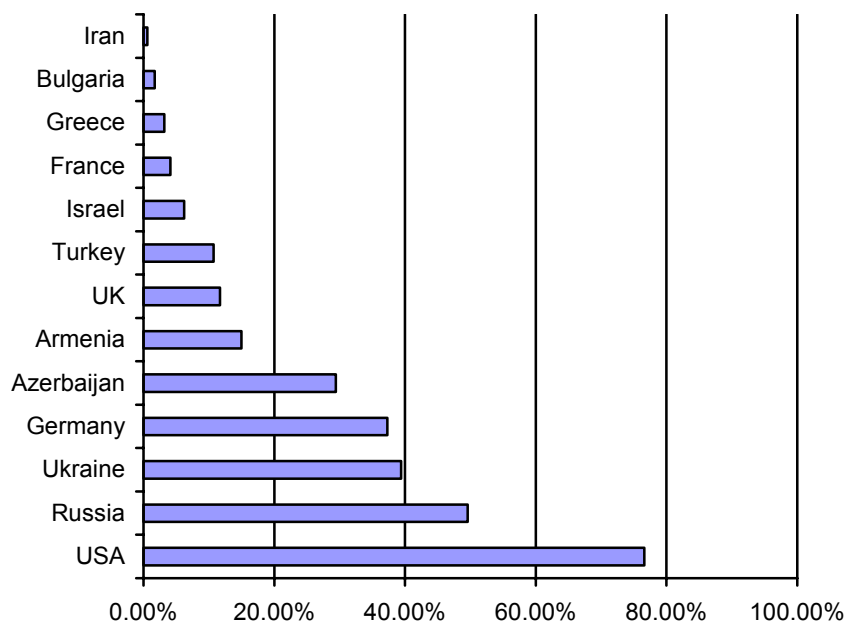


Figure 4
Countries that Georgia can rely on

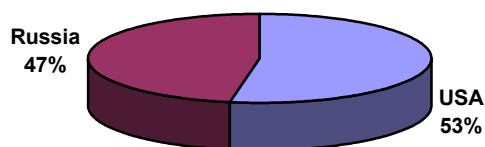


Figure 5
Preference expressed by respondents to either the USA or Russia as the main foreign partners.

Thus, there is a major division in the society between those who considers Russia as the most important foreign partner and those who are looking in the direction of the USA. Statistically significant difference between these two groups was found as related to many issues. E.g., the economic condition of the US-oriented respondents' families had improved during the past 5 years. US supporters also maintain more active civil position, they think that the problems faced by Georgia could only be solved through active participation of ordinary citizens, more of them believe they could influence the government decisions, more of them plan to take part in the parliamentary elections, and think that what one achieves in life more depends on himself/herself than on others and on the circumstances. More members of this group look at the future with optimism, more of them think it possible to lead a decent life by honest work in today's Georgia, and more support the idea that for the success in elections, unification of opposition parties is necessary. It is not at all surprising, of course, that the US supporters like President Bush, while those with pro-Russian orientation express preference to President Putin.

The foreign priorities of these two groups also differ. Higher proportion of US-oriented respondents stated that Georgia should leave CIS, should strive to join NATO and achieve EU membership. The higher proportion of them also had justified the US intervention in Iraq, and the support of this intervention by the Georgian government. More of them also opted for the closure of Russian military bases in Georgia, and were against the prolongation of the mandate of Russian peacekeepers in Abkhazia.

The differences in foreign orientations of respondents got reflected in their political preferences – orientation on Russia was chosen by supporters of Abashidze, Patiashvili and Saakashvili, while US-oriented respondents preferred of Gamkrelidze, Topadze and Natelashvili.

Table 18

Liking of politicians vs. foreign orientation

	Politician	Priority - relationship with Russia %	Priority - relationship with USA %	Total
1	Burjanadze <i>N=626</i>	45.7	54.3	100
2	Abashidze <i>N=295</i>	55.6	44.4	100
3	Gamkrelidze <i>N=223</i>	43.5	56.5	100
4	Topadze <i>N=490</i>	43.9	56.1	100
5	Zhvania <i>N=201</i>	45.8	54.2	100
6	Natelashvili <i>N=471</i>	45.4	54.6	100
7	Patiashvili <i>N=328</i>	54.3	45.7	100
8	Saakashvili <i>N=364</i>	46.7	53.3	100

These differences were also reflected through the assessment by respondents of the military operation in Iraq – most of all it was justified by the supporters of Gamkrelidze, Zhvania and Saakashvili, and it was the least accepted by the supporters of Patiashvili, Abashidze and Natelashvili.

Table 19

Liking of politicians and the attitude toward military operation in Iraq

N	Politician	Justify the operation %	Do not justify %	Difficult to answer %	Total
1	Burjanadze <i>N=635</i>	41.1	31.7	27.2	100
2	Abashidze <i>N=294</i>	37.4	39.8	22.8	100
3	Gamkrelidze <i>N=229</i>	49.3	25.8	24.9	100
4	Topadze <i>N=494</i>	42.5	34.2	23.3	100
5	Zhvania <i>N=202</i>	48.5	28.7	22.8	100
6	Natelashvili <i>N=477</i>	39.6	37.1	23.3	100
7	Patiashvili <i>N=333</i>	37.2	41.4	21.3	100
8	Saakashvili <i>N=366</i>	45.6	30.3	24.0	100

The fate of Russian military bases in Georgia still remains a sensitive issue. The most critical attitude toward Russian bases was expressed by supporters of Gamkrelidze, Natelashvili and Zhvania, the most positive – by supporters of Abashidze, Patiashvili and, paradoxically, again Zhvania; the most numerous undetermined respondents were among the supporters of Topadze, Abashidze and Patiashvili. All in all, the absolute majority of the respondents, 63.3% (60.7% in 2002) states that in the next 5 years all Russian military bases located in Georgia should be closed; 23.9% (22.6% in 2002) does not have a position, and 12.8% (16.8% in 2002) is against the closure of the bases. It is interesting to note that the bigger proportion of urban respondents (67.2%) as compared to rural ones (58.2%) supports the closure. The position is also somewhat different between the poor and the non-poor. Higher proportion

of the non-poor (64.8%) than the poor (35.2%) want the bases to be closed down. Again, the difference between the age groups is insignificant.

Table 20

Liking of politicians and attitude towards the closure of Russian military bases

N	Politician	Bases should be closed %	Bases should not be closed %	Difficult to answer %	Total
1	Burjaandze N=634	68.5	12.5	19.1	100
2	Abashidze N=295	54.6	22.7	22.7	100
3	Gamkrelidze N=228	73.2	11.8	14.9	100
4	Topadze N=495	65.5	11.7	22.8	100
5	Zhvania N=202	68.3	14.9	16.8	100
6	Natelashvili N=476	69.1	12.0	18.9	100
7	Patiashvili N=334	62.0	17.4	20.7	100
8	Saakashvili N=365	65.2	14.8	20.0	100

Not less problematic is the issue of military assistance. In general there is a positive attitude towards American and Turkish military assistance. 87.0% (82.3% in November) reveals positive attitude towards operating in the country now American military assistance program, 13.0% (19.7% in November) evaluates it negatively. Slightly small number, 66.9% (62.6% in November) reveals positive attitude towards Turkish assistance. American assistance is more favoured in towns (86.8%) than in countryside (80.3%). The difference is also observed between poor and non-poor. The bigger proportion of non-poor (66.2%) than poor (33.8%) evaluates it positively. The more is difference in evaluation Turkish military assistance. It is also more positively looked at in towns (70.0%) than in countryside (62.8%).

Most positively the US assistance is evaluated by the supporters of Zhvania, Saakashvili and Gamkrelidze, most negatively by the supporters of Patiashvili, Abashidze and Burjanadze.

Table 21

Liking of politicians and the attitude towards US military assistance

N	Politician	Positive %	Negative %	Difficult to say %	Total %
1	Burjanadze N=635	85.7	9.6	4.7	100
2	Abashidze N=294	79.9	11.9	8.2	100
3	Gamkrelidze N=227	86.8	7.9	5.3	100
4	Topadze N=496	86.3	8.7	5.0	100
5	Zhvania N=202	92.1	5.0	3.0	100
6	Natelashvili N=477	86.8	8.4	4.8	100
7	Patiashvili N=330	80.9	13.3	5.8	100
8	Saakashvili N=364	87.6	8.2	4.1	100

Whom the population of Georgia knows and whom it does not know

It is worth noting that the population knows much better those politicians who lead bigger political parties or are MPs than the representatives of the executive power, even such as Deputy State Minister Akaki Zoidze, who is virtually unknown to the majority of respondents. Below are ranked various political figures by their public visibility, i.e. by how well are their names known by respondents.

Table 22

Ranking of politicians by the level of public recognition

	Politician	Do not know who is he/she %
1	Akaki Zoidze	53.9
2	Vitali Khazaradze	14.5
3	David Gamkrelidze	13.2
4	Igor Giorgadze	11.8
5	Vazha Lordkipanidze	11
6	Levan Gachehiladze	9.9
7	Irakli Batiashvili	9.5
8	Guram Sharadze	9.3
9	Giorgi Baramidze	8.5
10	Mikhail Machavariani	8.4
11	Akaki Asatiani	7.3
12	Temur Shashiashvili	7.0
13	Gogi Topadze	5.7
14	Vakhtang Rcheulishvili	5.1
15	Irina Sarishvili	4.3
16	Shalva Natelashvili	4.3
17	Jumber Patiashvili	3.8
18	Avtandil Jorbenadze	3.8
19	Aslan Abashidze	3.7
20	Mikhail Saakashvili	3.4
21	Zurab Zhvania	3.0
22	Nino Burjanadze	2.1
23	Eduard Shevardnadze	1.6

At the same time it seems interesting to compare the public visibility of politicians with that of other public figures, among whom were listed some representatives of executive power, as well as MP and businessman Gogi Topadze who has a multiple public image.

Table 23

Ranking of public figures by their recognition by respondents

	Public figure	Do not know who (s)he is %
1	Ghia Nodia	58.4
2	Guram Akhvlediani	56.2
3	Zaza Okuashvili	52.9
4	Zurab Tkemaladze	41.1
5	Giga Bokeria	38.3
6	Bidzina Ivanishvili	37.6
7	Tedo Japaridze	32.6
8	Levan Berdzenishvili	32.5
9	Mamuka Khazaradze	30.7
10	Vano Chkhartishvili	24.6

11	Ghia Jokhtaberidze	24.4
12	Ghia Chanturais	22.2
13	Nugzar Shevardnadze	18.4
14	Temur Chkonia	17.8
15	Akaki Gogichaishvili	16.3
16	Roin Metreveli	14.3
17	Eka Khoperia	11.9
18	Niko Lekishvili	11.3
19	Irakli Menagarishvili	9.5
20	Koba Narchemashvili	8.2
21	Badri Patarkatsishvili	8
22	Gogi Topadze	5.5
23	Ilia II (Shiolashvili)	2.4

Also, respondents were requested to evaluate above listed 23 public figures according to their positive contribution to the well being of the nation. The Catholicos of the Georgian Orthodox Church Ilia II heads the list, followed by Gogi Topadze, while the President's nephew and businessman Nugzar Shevardnadze is at the bottom, preceded by the father-in-law of the President's son, businessman Guram Akhvlediani. It is also worth paying attention to the fact that among the top ten public figures, there are five businessmen (one more – Tchanturia - heads GIOC, Georgian International Oil Company) and two are TV hosts.

Table 25

Assessment by respondents of contribution by public figures
(excluding those, who did not know the given person)

Rank	Public figure	Has done much good for the nation %	Difficult to say %	Has not done good for the nation %	Total %
1	Ilia II	74	19.5	6.4	100
2	Gogi Topadze	72.9	22.2	4.9	100
3	Bidzina Ivanishvili	63.5	29.1	7.4	100
4	Akaki Gogichaishvili	59.1	31.8	9.1	100
5	Eka Khoperia	57.5	32.7	9.7	100
6	Badri Patarkatsishvili	52.7	36.9	10.4	100
7	Temur Chkonia	43.2	38	18.7	100
8	Ghia Chanturia	41.8	40.7	17.5	100
9	Mamuka Khazaradze	32.2	48	19.8	100
10	Levan Berdzenishvili	28.2	52.9	19	100
11	Roin Metreveli	27	40.2	32.7	100
12	Zurab Tkemaladze	26.5	52.5	21	100
13	Ghia Jokhtaberidze	24.3	37.5	38.2	100
14	Zaza Okuashvili	23.6	47	29.4	100
15	Niko Lekishvili	22.4	48.8	28.8	100
16	Irakli Menagarashvili	22.2	51.9	25.9	100
17	Tedo Japaridze	20.4	51.7	27.9	100
18	Ghia Nodia	18.4	53.2	28.4	100
19	Koba Narchemashvili	19.7	46.5	33.8	100
20	Giga Bokeria	17.8	45.2	37.1	100
21	Vano Chkhartishvili	11.1	41.8	47.1	100
22	Guram Akhvlediani	10.7	58.2	31.1	100
23	Nugzar Shevardnadze	8.4	33.3	58.4	100

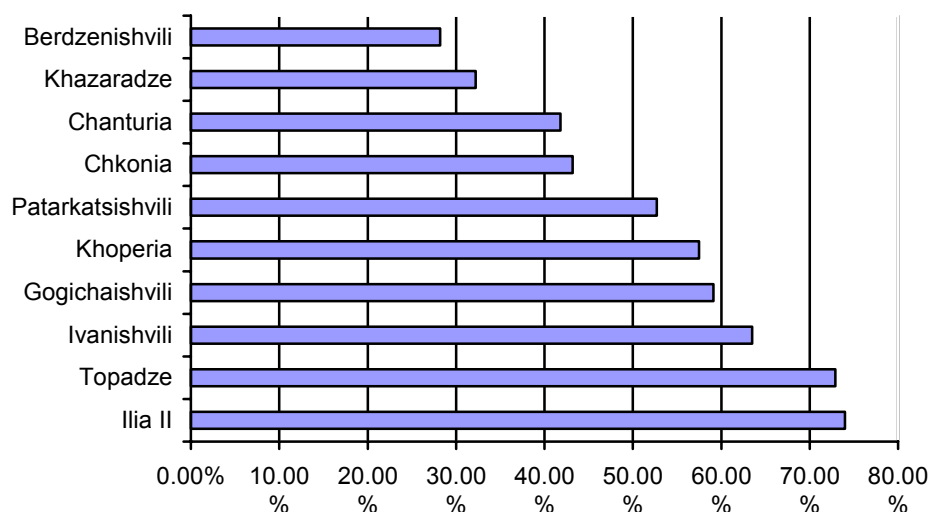


Figure 6
Ten public figures with the highest approval rate

Presidents today and tomorrow

The June, 2003 survey unequivocally indicated that the political leadership of Georgia gradually loses the trust of the population.

Respondents were asked to express their attitude toward the presidents of five countries (Azerbaijan, USA, Armenia, Russia and Georgia) and also Georgian politicians with prospect of being elected for the presidency. Naturally, respondents did not know all the presidents equally well – 3.5% did not know who was Shevardnadze (sic!), 7.8% - Putin, 9.6% - Bush, 32.2% - Aliev and 38.1% - Kocharian. It should be noted that since November 2002 public opinion regarding presidents has formed more clearly, and they were better known. Primarily this concerns Armenia's President Kocharian (in November 2002 46.2% had nothing to say on him), probably attributed to the recent Presidential elections in Armenia and its coverage in the media, as well as Kocharian's visit to Tbilisi. The number of respondents who did not have opinion also fell in cases of Bush (from 14% to 9.6%), Aliev (from 4.6% to 3.5%), Putin (from 9.0% to 7.8%) and Shevardnadze (from 14.0% to 9.6%). The attitude has changed significantly in cases of Shevardnadze (liked on 2003 by 7.0% less respondents than in 2002), and Putin (popularity increased by 5.0% of respondents). The champion among presidents was Bush (liked by 43.0% in June 2003 and 44.9% in 2002), followed by Aliev (24.2% in June 2003 and 22.7% in 2003), then Putin (25.8% in 2003 and 20.9% in 2002), followed by Kocharian (14.2% in 2002 and 14.6% in 2002), and only then at the end was Shevardnadze (13.8% in June 2003 vs. 20.8% in November, 2003), whose popularity had dropped very significantly during the period between surveys.

Table 26

Attitude toward the presidents of five countries

N	President	Mostly like %		Neutral %		Do not like %		Total %	
		November 2002	June 2003	November 2002	June 2003	November 2002	June 2003	November 2002	June 2003
1	George W. Bush	44.9	43	32.7	37.5	22.4	19.5	100	100
2	Heidar Aliev	22.7	24.2	36	44.7	41.3	31.2	100	100
3	Vladimir Putin	20.9	25.8	35.8	33.8	43.3	40.3	100	100
4	Eduard Shevardnadze	20.8	13.8	20	29.4	59.2	56.7	100	100
5	Robert Kocharian	14.6	14.2	31.9	43.7	53.5	42.1	100	100

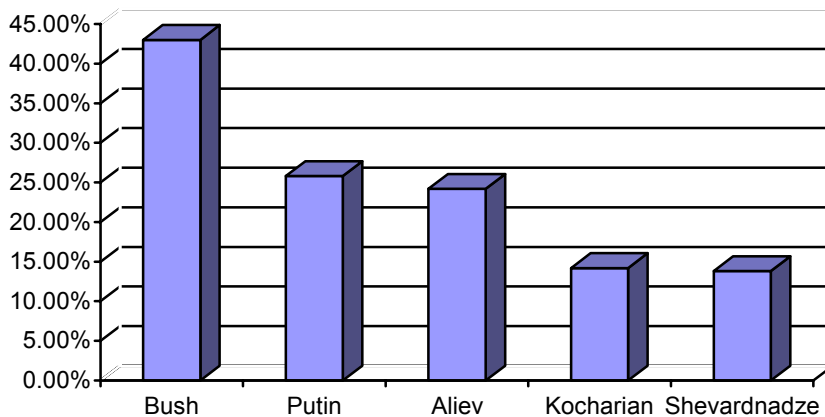


Figure 6

Popularity of the presidents

In less than two years the Georgia's population will have to elect a new president, hence it is due time to consider possible candidates. In June 2003 the most favourable positions had three politicians - Mikhail Saakashvili, Shalva Natelashvili and Nino Burjanadze. It is important to pay attention to the difference between those, whom respondents believe will become elected as president of the country, and whom they personally wish to be elected as such (but possibly do not consider this realistic). Such discrepancy was best revealed in cases of Mikhail Saakashvili and Nino Burjanadze, although in different directions: more respondents wanted Burjanadze to become the president, while the less believed this will happen; Saakashvili, on the contrary, was wanted by less respondents, but more were convinced that he will be elected. Difference is also significant in the case of the incumbent president Shevardnadze, who is prohibited by the constitution to be elected any more – still, 13.0% of respondents expect this to happen. In cases of Natelashvili, Burjanadze and Patiashvili the numbers of their “supporters” is higher than of “believers”, while in cases of Saakashvili, Shevardnadze and Zhvania the opposite tendency is evident. Such differences stem probably from the perception of their political skills and career potential as compared to other positive qualities.

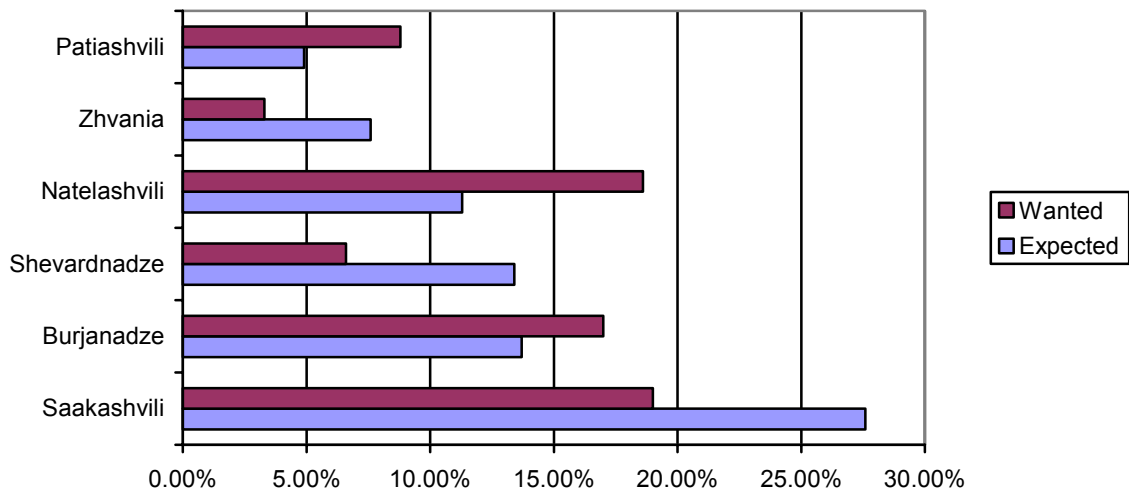


Figure 7

Politicians expected to become or preferred as future presidents

Political parties and the parliamentary elections

The November 2, 2003, Parliamentary elections evoke a big deal of interest among the population. The majority of respondents – 60.3%, intends to take part in elections (20.5% had not made the decision by the time of the survey, 19.3% did not intend to vote). The readiness to participate is higher among the rural (65.2%) than urban (56.7%) respondents, while the difference between the groups with different economic status and age is not significant.

The main criteria for the evaluation of the attractiveness of a political party for the majority of 42.4% was the record of past achievements of the party in question, for 24.4% it was the party programme and agenda, for 15.6% - personal attitude toward the party leader(s), for 7.5% - personal attitude towards some party members, for 5.9% - public speeches of party speakers, for 4.1% - other factors.

In June 2003, answering the question as to for which party they would vote if the elections were to be held that day, 46.3% stated they had not decided as yet; 25.5% declared that would not vote for any party; 10.3% would render their vote for the Labour party, 4.2% - for the Revival, 4.1% - for National Movement, 3.1% - for the New Rights, 2.6% - for the Citizen's Union, 1.5% for United Democrats (NB - formation of party blocks and the unification of Burjanadze and Democrats took place after the June survey). As to which party or block would obtain the majority of seats in November 2 elections, the majority of respondents (51.2%) could not answer the question. In the opinion of 12.4% Labour party will win the elections, of 11.4% - the Citizen's Union, 8.4% - National Movement, 5.1% - the Revival. Especially meaningful is the difference between the preferences and expected outcomes regard the Citizens Union, pointing to certain political fatalism and to the importance that the population ascribe to so called "administrative resource" (exploiting opportunities available to the ruling elite) in elections. Also is worth noting that almost half of respondents (49.2%) expect the results of the elections to be rigged (39.4% had no position on this issue, 11.3% expected the elections to be held fair).

The urban and rural respondents, as well as the representatives of different age groups do not differ in their support of different parties. On the other hand, significant differences are found between the poor and the non-poor.

Table

Political parties whom respondents expected, and whom they wanted to win elections

N	Parties	Expect to win %	Will vote for %
1	Labour Party	12.4	10.3
2	Citizen's Union	11.4	2.6
3	National Movement	8.4	4.1
4	Revival	5.1	4.2
5	New Rights	4.1	3.1
6	For New Georgia	2.8	0.6
7	United Democrats	3.6	1.5
8	Undustry will save Georgia	0.5	0.6
9	Socialist Party	0.2	0
10	Unity	0.1	0.3
11	Traditionalist Party	0.1	0.2
12	People's Party	0.1	0.1
13	Christian-Democratic Union of Georgia	0	0.4
14	Communist Party	0	0.2
15	Strong Svaneti	0	0.2
16	"Mdzleveli" (Victorious)	0	0.1
17	Georgian League	0	0.1
18	Ilia Chavchavadzed Society	0	0.1
19	Cannot answer	51.2	46.3
20	Nobody		25
	Total	100	100

Conclusions

Despite the fact, that political landscape is rapidly changing, the attitude of population towards important political issues changes much slower. It is possible to distinguish three main groups of factors that influence the political preferences of the public: social status, external orientation (Russia/West), and the personality characteristics.

Social and economic profile: Rural-urban, education, self-assessment of economic status.

Such politicians, as Zurab Zhvania, Gogi Topadze, David Gamkrelidze, Nino Burjanadze are mainly supported by urban population, people with the university education and with relatively high income.

At the same time supporters of Jumber Patiashvili, Mikheil Saakashvili, Aslan Abashidze and Shalva Natelashvili first of all belong to rural population, with lower educational level and low income. Although there are some surprises as well – Gamkrelidze is also relatively popular among the poor, Saakashvili - among the non-poor.

External orientation. Relying on Russia or on the USA/West. Respective variables include the assessment of the military operations in Iraq, US military assistance to Georgia, attitude towards the closure of Russian military bases, and the direct choice between Russia and USA.

The most significant trend observed is the increase of the orientation towards the West. Respectively, the most pro-American are supporters of Gamkrelidze, but also supporters of Zhvania, Natelashvili, Saakashvili, as well as some of Topadze supporters. Clearly pro-Russian orientation is found among the supporters of Abashidze and Patiashvili. Burjanadze supporters orient more toward the US, but they also do not ignore the importance of Russia.

Personality features. E.g. - optimism. Supporters of Burjanadze, Topadze and Gamkrelidze look at the life with more hope and optimism, are more ready to take the responsibility for it in their hands; Among the supporters of Patiashvili, Saakashvili and Natelashvili there are more socially passive, relying on external involvement, they have less hope and optimism.